

Is this why regular people believe the 2020 US presidential election was rigged?

by: Darryl Cooper, aka @MartyrMade, July 2021, www.theunravelingpodcast.com

I think I've had discussions w/enough Boomer-tier Trump supporters who believe the 2020 election was fraudulent to extract a general theory about their perspective. It is also the perspective of most of the people at the Capitol on 1/6, and probably even Trump himself.

Most believe some or all of the theories involving midnight ballots, voting machines, etc, but what you find when you talk to them is that, while they'll defend those positions w/info they got from Hannity or Breitbart or whatever, they're not particularly attached to them.

Here are the facts – actual, confirmed facts – that shape their perspective: 1) The FBI/etc spied on the 2016 Trump campaign using evidence manufactured by the Clinton campaign. We now know that all involved knew it was fake from Day 1 (see: Brennan's July 2016 memo, etc). These are Tea Party people. The types who give their kids a pocket Constitution for their birthday and have Founding Fathers memes in their bios. The intel community spying on a presidential campaign using fake evidence (incl forged documents) is a big deal to them. Everyone involved lied about their involvement as long as they could. We only learned the DNC paid for the manufactured evidence because of a court order. Comey denied on TV knowing the DNC paid for it, when we have emails from a year earlier proving that he knew. This was true with everyone, from CIA Dir Brennan & Adam Schiff – who were on TV saying they'd seen clear evidence of collusion w/Russia, while admitting under oath behind closed doors that they hadn't – all the way down the line. In the end we learned that it was ALL fake. At first, many Trump ppl were worried there must be some collusion, because every media & intel agency wouldn't make it up out of nothing. When it was clear that they had made it up, people expected a reckoning, and shed many illusions about their gov't when it didn't happen.

We know as fact:

- a) The Steele dossier was the sole evidence used to justify spying on the Trump campaign,
- b) The FBI knew the Steele dossier was a DNC op,
- c) Steele's source told the FBI the info was unserious,
- d) they did not inform the court of any of this and kept spying.



Trump supporters know the collusion case front and back. They went from worrying the collusion must be real, to suspecting it might be fake, to realizing it was a scam, then watched as every institution – agencies, the press, Congress, academia – gaslit them for another year. Worse, collusion was used to scare people away from working in the administration. They knew their entire lives would be investigated. Many quit because they were being bankrupted by legal fees. The DoJ, press, & gov't destroyed lives and actively subverted an elected admin. This is where people whose political identity was largely defined by a naive belief in what they learned in Civics class began to see the outline of a Regime that crossed all institutional boundaries. Because it had stepped out of the shadows to unite against an interloper. GOP propaganda still has many of them thinking in terms of partisan binaries, but A LOT of Trump supporters see that the Regime is not partisan. They all know that the same institutions would have taken opposite sides if it was a Tulsi Gabbard vs Jeb Bush election. It's hard to describe to people on the left (who are used to thinking of gov't as a conspiracy... Watergate, COINTELPRO, WMD, etc) how shocking & disillusioning this was for people who encourage their sons to enlist in the Army, and hate ppl who don't stand for the Anthem. They could have managed the shock if it only involved the government. But the behavior of the corporate press is really what radicalized them. They hate journalists more than they hate any politician or gov't official, because they feel most betrayed by them. The idea that the press is driven by ratings/sensationalism became untenable. If that were true, they'd be all over the Epstein story. The corporate press is the propaganda arm of the Regime they now see in outline. Nothing anyone says will ever make them unsee that, period. This is profoundly disorienting. Many of them don't know for certain whether ballots were faked in November 2020, but they know for absolute certain that the press, the FBI, etc would lie to them if there was. They have every reason to believe that, and it's probably true. They watched the press behave like animals for four years. Tens of millions of people will always see Kavanaugh as a gang rapist, based on nothing, because of CNN. And CNN seems proud of that. They led a lynch mob against a high school kid. They cheered on a summer of riots.



They always claimed the media had liberal bias, fine, whatever. They still thought the press would admit truth if they were cornered. Now they don't. It's a different thing to watch them invent stories whole cloth in order to destroy regular lives and spark mass violence. Time Mag told us that during the 2020 riots, there were weekly conference calls involving, among others, leaders of the protests, the local officials who refused to stop them, and media people who framed them for political effect. In Ukraine we call that a color revolution. Throughout the summer, Democrat governors took advantage of COVID to change voting procedures. It wasn't just the mail-ins (they lowered signature matching standards, etc). After the collusion scam, the fake impeachment, Trump ppl expected shenanigans by now. Re: "fake impeachment", we now know that Trump's request for Ukraine to cooperate w/the DOJ regarding Biden's \$ activities in Ukraine was in support of an active investigation being pursued by the FBI and Ukraine AG at the time, and so a completely legitimate request. Then you get the Hunter laptop scandal. Big Tech ran a full-on censorship campaign against a major newspaper to protect a political candidate. Period. Everyone knows it, all of the Tech companies now admit it was a "mistake" – but, ya know, the election's over, so who cares? Goes w/o saying, but: If the NY Times had Don Jr's laptop, full of pics of him smoking crack and engaging in group sex, lots of lurid family drama, emails describing direct corruption and backed up by the CEO of the company they were using, the NYT wouldn't have been banned.

Think back: Stories about Trump being pissed on by Russian prostitutes and blackmailed by Putin were promoted as fact, and the only evidence was a document paid for by his opposition and disavowed by its source. The NY Post was banned for reporting on true information. The reaction of Trump ppl to all this was not, "no fair!" That's how they felt about Romney's "binders of women" in 2012. This is different. Now they see, correctly, that every institution is captured by ppl who will use any means to exclude them from the political process. And yet they showed up in record numbers to vote. He got 13m more votes than in 2016, 10m more than Clinton got! As election night dragged on, they allowed themselves

some hope. But when the four critical swing states (and only those states) went dark at midnight, they knew. Over the ensuing weeks, they got shuffled around by grifters and media scam artists selling them conspiracy theories. They latched onto one, then another increasingly absurd theory as they tried to put a concrete name on something very real Media & Tech did everything to make things worse. Everything about the election was strange – the changes to procedure, unprecedented mail-in voting, the delays, etc – but rather than admit that and make everything transparent, they banned discussion of it (even in DMs!). Everyone knows that, just as Don Jr's laptop would've been the story of the century, if everything about the election dispute was the same, except the parties were reversed, suspicions about the outcome would've been Taken Very Seriously. See 2016 for proof. Even the courts' refusal of the case gets nowhere w/them, because of how the opposition embraced mass political violence. They'll say, w/good reason: What judge will stick his neck out for Trump knowing he'll be destroyed in the media as a violent mob burns down his house? It's a fact, according to Time Magazine, that mass riots were planned in cities across the country if Trump won. Sure, they were "protests", but they were planned by the same people as during the summer, and everyone knows what it would have meant. Judges have families, too. Forget the ballot conspiracies. It's a fact that governors used COVID to unconstitutionally alter election procedures (the Constitution states that only legislatures can do so) to help Biden to make up for a massive enthusiasm gap by gaming the mail-in ballot system. They knew it was unconstitutional, it's right there in plain English. But they knew the cases wouldn't see court until after the election. And what judge will toss millions of ballots because a governor broke the rules? The threat of mass riots wasn't implied, it was direct.

- a) The entrenched bureaucracy & security state subverted Trump from Day 1,
- b) The press is part of the operation,
- c) Election rules were changed,
- d) Big Tech censors opposition,
- e) Political violence is legitimized & encouraged,
- f) Trump is banned from social media.

They were led down some rabbit holes, but they are absolutely right that their gov't is monopolized by a Regime that believes they are beneath representation, and will observe no limits to keep them getting it. Trump fans should be happy he lost; it might've kept him alive. /end

Author of the Mega-Viral Thread on MAGA Voters, Darryl Cooper, Explains His Thinking

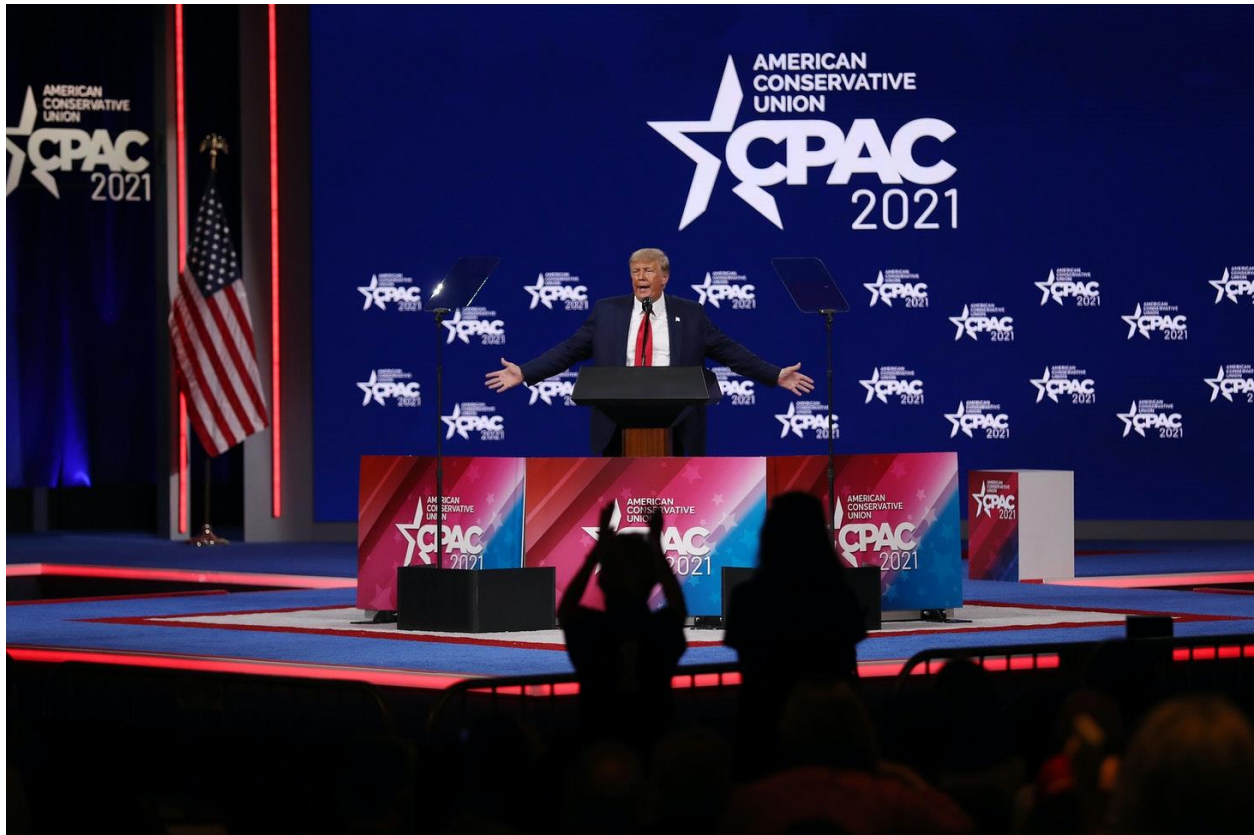
Tucker Carlson devoted seven minutes of airtime to reading it. Donald Trump heaped praise on it. Why did this Twitter analysis resonate so widely on the right?

NOTE FROM GLENN GREENWALD: On Friday, a relatively obscure Twitter user with fewer than 7,000 followers — posting under the pseudonym MartyrMade — posted one of the most mega-viral threads of the year. Over the course of thirty-five tweets, the writer, a podcast host whose real name is Darryl Cooper, set out to explain the mindset that has led so many Trump supporters to believe that the 2020 election was fraudulent and, more generally, to lose faith and trust in most U.S. institutions of authority.

Numerous journalists, including me, promoted the thread as one of the most insightful analyses yet published explaining the animating convictions underlying the MAGA movement. That night, Fox News host Tucker Carlson devoted a seven-minute segment to doing nothing more than reading Cooper's thread. At the CPAC conference on Sunday, former President Donald Trump explicitly recommended the thread using Cooper's name. In the last four days, Cooper's Twitter account has gained more than 70,000 followers. Clearly, this thread resonated strongly with that political faction as a true and important explanation of how many MAGA voters have come to understand the world.

For our Outside Voices freelance section, we asked Cooper to elaborate on his influential thread, with a focus on what led him to these observations about prevailing MAGA sentiments and why he believes they are important for people to understand. As Cooper notes, he does not share all of the perceptions and beliefs he is conveying, although he shares many of them. Instead, based on the recognition that most media outlets are incapable of understanding let alone accurately describing the views of a group of people they view with little more than unmitigated contempt, condescension and scorn, he believes it is imperative that people understand the actual reality of what is motivating so many Trump voters in their views, perceptions and beliefs — regardless of whether each particular belief is accurate or not.

We also believe this understanding is vital, which is why we are happy to publish Cooper's essay. It should go without saying that, as is true of all of our articles published on Outside Voices -- which we treat as an op-ed page -- our publishing of this article does not signify agreement with all of its claims, but only our belief that it is a viewpoint worth airing.



Former U.S. President Donald Trump addresses the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) held in the Hyatt Regency on February 28, 2021 in Orlando, Florida (Photo by Joe Raedle/Getty Images).

By Darryl Cooper

I quit Twitter last August. Quit for good. Other than posting links to two new episodes of my podcast, I stayed away for eight months and didn't regret a thing. Around mid-June I let myself be persuaded that social media engagement was part of having a podcast, so I dipped back in, promising myself I'd avoid being pulled into politics. Things haven't gone as planned.

The temptation was disguised cleverly as a conversation with a friend's mother. She was visiting from upstate New York and we got to talking while my buddy was in the house tending to my goddaughter. She's a hardcore Trumper from a less cynical generation that believes what she hears from sources she trusts. She'd been hounding her son about the stolen election all week, and he'd been trying to disabuse her of various theories involving trucked-in ballots and hacked counting machines. Now she had me cornered and put the question to me: "Do YOU think the election was legit?" So I told her the truth: I don't know.

By the time my friend had put the baby to bed and rejoined us, we were waist-deep in a discussion about what happened last year, and she was satisfied that I was on her side. "See?!? He (she meant me) knows what's going on! I'm not crazy. He's smart, and HE knows!" My friend pulled the Captain Picard facepalm, and said, "Darryl, what the f*ck are you telling her?"

What I told her was some version of the Twitter thread Tucker Carlson read on air Friday night and which President Trump, using my name, then explicitly promoted in his speech to CPAC on Sunday, which has blown my inbox, and my promise to stay away from politics, to smithereens.

I told her I didn't know much about the ballots, or the voting machines, or some company that she'd heard had ties to Venezuela. I didn't follow Sidney Powell, or Lin Wood, or the details of the cases proceeding through the system. I think it was around the time Rudy Giuliani chose a landscape and gardening emporium as the location for a press conference on what would have been the greatest political scandal in American history that I made the conscious decision to stop paying attention. Or maybe it was the dripping hair dye, or something about a kraken — it's all sort of blended together these days.

But I felt for her. She wasn't the first person with whom I'd had the discussion, and I felt for all of them. I've had the discussion often enough that I feel comfortable extracting a general theory about where these people are coming from.

RUSSIAGATE: THE ORIGINAL SIN

Like my friend's mother, most of them believe some or all of the theories involving fraudulent ballots, voting machines, and the rest. Scratch the surface and you'll find that they're not particularly attached to any one of them. The specific theories were almost a kind of synecdoche, a concrete symbol representing a deeply felt, but difficult to describe, sense that whatever happened in 2020, it was not a meaningfully democratic presidential election. The counting delays, the last-minute changes to election procedures, the unprecedented coordinated censorship campaign by Big Tech in defense of Biden were all understood as the culmination of the pan-institutional anti-Trump campaign they'd watched unfold for over four years.

Many of them deny it now, but a lot of 2016 Trump voters were worried during the early stages of the Russia collusion investigation. True, the evidence seemed thin, and the very idea that the US and allied security apparatus would allow Trump to take office if they really thought he might be under Russian blackmail seemed a bit preposterous on its face. But to many conservatives in 2016 and early 2017, it seemed equally preposterous that the institutions they trusted, and even the ones they didn't, would go all-in on a story if there wasn't at least something to it. Imagine the consequences for these institutions if it turned out there was nothing to it.

We now know that the FBI and other intelligence agencies conducted covert surveillance against members of the Trump campaign based on evidence manufactured by political operatives working for the Clinton campaign, both before and after the election. We know that those involved with the investigation knew the accusations of collusion were part of a campaign "approved by Hillary Clinton... to vilify Donald Trump by stirring up a scandal claiming interference by the Russian security service." They might have expected such behavior from the Clintons — politics is a violent game and Hillary's got a lot of scalps on her wall. But many of the people watching this happen were Tea Party types, in spirit if not in actual fact. They give their kids a pocket Constitution for their birthday. They have Yellow Ribbon bumper stickers, and fly the POW/MIA flag under the front-porch Stars and Stripes, and curl their lip at

people who talk during the National Anthem at ballgames. They're the people who believed their institutions when they were told Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. To them, the intel community using fake evidence (including falsified documents) to spy on a presidential campaign is a big deal.

It may surprise many liberals, but most conservative normies actually know the Russia collusion case front and back. A whole ecosystem sprouted up to pore over every new development, and conservatives followed the details as avidly as any follower of liberal conspiracy theorists Seth Abramson or Marcy Wheeler. When the world learned of the infamous meeting between Trump campaign officials and Russian lawyer Natalia Veselnitskaya, it seemed like a problem and many Trump supporters took it seriously. Deep down, even those who rejected the possibility of open collusion worried that one of Trump's inexperienced family members, or else a sketchy operative glomming onto the campaign, might have done something that, whatever its real gravity, could be successfully framed in a manner to sway a dozen of John McCain's friends in the Senate.

Then, Trump supporters learned that Veselnitskaya was working with Fusion GPS, the political research and PR firm used by the Clinton campaign to formulate and spread the collusion accusations. They learned that the anti-Clinton information that was supposed to be the subject of the notorious meeting was provided by the same firm. They learned that she'd had dinner with Glenn Simpson, the owner of Fusion GPS, both the day before, and the day after the meeting. Needless to say, Trump supporters were skeptical of Simpson's claim that Veselnitskaya's meeting with Trump campaign officials never came up during either of their dinner dates, given that the content of the meeting was alleged to be the very treasonous, impeachable crime his firm was being paid to investigate and publicize.

There's no need to relive all the details of the Russia collusion scam. The point is that conservatives were following it all very closely, in real time, and they noticed when things didn't add up. After James Comey told Fox News' Bret Baier that, even at the time of their interview in April 2018, he didn't know who had funded the Steele dossier, conservatives noticed when the December 2019 DOJ Inspector General's report showed that he had been informed of the dossier's provenance in October 2016. And they asked themselves: Why would he lie? Lying to investigators about one's knowledge of or involvement in a potentially criminal act is often taken as consciousness of guilt.

This was the bone that stuck in conservatives' craw throughout the two years of hysteria over Russia. Why would Comey lie about knowing where the dossier came from? Why would the people involved claim to have seen evidence that never seemed to materialize? If the point of the Special Counsel is to take the investigation out of the hands of line investigators to avoid the appearance of political influence, why staff the office with known partisans and the same FBI personnel who originated and oversaw the case? Why was the relationship between Russian lawyer Veselnitskaya and Fusion GPS being dismissed as irrelevant? Why were people who must know better continuing to insist that the Steele dossier was originally funded by Republicans long after the claim had been debunked? Why wasn't the media asking even these most obvious questions? And why were they giving themselves awards for refusing to ask those questions, and viciously attacking journalists who did ask them? These journalists are intelligent people — at least they present that way on television. Is it possible that these questions simply had not occurred to them? It seemed unlikely.

Many Trump supporters reasoned that it was simply not possible to carry on this campaign without some degree of coordination. That coordination perhaps did not take place in smoke-filled rooms (though they weren't ruling it out), but at least through incentives, pressure, and vague but certain threats all well-understood by people who moved about in the same professional and social class, and who complained that they could "smell the Trump support" when they were unfortunate enough to have to patronize a Wal-Mart.

If there was a time when Trump supporters feared Robert Mueller's goon squad, that time had passed by the 2018 midterm elections. Conservatives knew by then the whole case was bunk, and they were salivating at the prospect of watching him get chopped up by the likes of Jim Jordan and Devin Nunes. And he did.

The collusion case wasn't only used to damage Trump in the polls or distract from his political agenda. It was used as an open threat to keep people from working in the administration. Taking a job in the Trump administration meant having one's entire life investigated for anything that could fill CNN's anti-Trump content requirement for another few days, whether or not it held up to scrutiny. Many administration employees quit because they were being bankrupted by legal fees due to an investigation that was known by its progenitors to be a political operation. The Department of Justice, press, and government used falsehoods to destroy lives and actively subvert an elected administration almost from the start. Perhaps worst of all, some portion of the American population was driven to the edge of madness by two years of being told that American politics had become a real-life version of The Manchurian Candidate. And not by Alex Jones, but by intelligence chiefs and politicians, amplified by media organizations which threw every ounce of their accumulated credibility behind the insanity.

For two years, Trump supporters had been called traitors and Russian bots for casting ballots for "Vladimir Putin's c*ck holster." They'd been subjected to a two-year gaslighting campaign by politicians, government agencies, and elite media. It took real fortitude to stand up to the unanimous mockery and scorn of these powerful institutions. But those institutions had gambled their power and credibility, and they'd lost, and now Trump supporters expected a reckoning. When no reckoning was forthcoming - when the Greenwalds, and Taibbis, and Matés of the world were not handed the New York Times' revoked Pulitzers for correctly and courageously standing against the tsunami on the biggest political story in years - these people shed many illusions about how power really operates in their country.

Trump supporters know - I think everyone knows - that Donald Trump would have been impeached and probably indicted if Robert Mueller had proven that he'd paid a foreign spy to gather damaging information on Hillary Clinton from sources connected to Russian intelligence and disseminate that information in the press. Many of Trump's own supporters wouldn't have objected to his removal if that had happened. Of course that is exactly what the Clinton campaign actually did, yet there were no consequences for it. Indeed, there has been almost no criticism of it.

Trump supporters had gone from worrying the collusion might be real, to suspecting it might be fake, to seeing proof that it was all a scam. Then they watched as every institution - government agencies, the press, Congressional committees, academia - blew right past it and gaslit them for another year. To this day, something like half the country still believes that Trump was caught red-handed engaging in treason with Russia, and only escaped a public hanging because of a DOJ technicality regarding the indictment of sitting presidents. Most galling, conservatives suspect that within a few decades liberals will use their command over the culture to ensure that virtually everyone believes it. This is where

people whose political identities have for decades been largely defined by a naive belief in what they learned in civics class began to see the outline of a Regime that crossed not only partisan, but all institutional boundaries. They'd been taught that America didn't have Regimes, but what else was this thing they'd seen step out from the shadows to unite against their interloper president?

THE ESTABLISHMENT UNITES

GOP propaganda still has many conservatives thinking in terms of partisan binaries. Even the dreaded RINO (Republican-In-Name-Only) slur serves the purposes of the party, because it implies that the Democrats represent an irreconcilable opposition. But many Trump supporters see clearly that the Regime is not partisan. They know that the same institutions would have taken opposite sides if it had been a Tulsi Gabbard vs. Jeb Bush election. It's hard to describe to people on the Left, who are used to thinking of American government as a conspiracy and are weaned on stories about Watergate, COINTELPRO, and Saddam's WMD, how shocking and disillusioning this was for people who encouraged their sons and daughters to go fight for their country when George W. Bush declared war on Iraq.

They could have managed the shock if it only involved the government. But the behavior of the press is what radicalized them. Trump supporters have more contempt for journalists than they have for any politician or government official, because they feel most betrayed by them. The idea that the corporate press is driven by ratings and sensationalism has become untenable over the last several years. If that were true, there'd be a microphone in the face of every executive branch official demanding to know what the former Secretary of Labor meant when he said that Jeffrey Epstein "belonged to intelligence." The corporate press is the propaganda arm of the Regime these people are now seeing in outline. Nothing anyone says will ever make them unsee that, period.

This is profoundly disorienting. Again, we're not talking about pre-2016 Greenwald readers or even Ron Paul libertarians, who swallowed half a bottle of red pills long ago. These are people who attacked Edward Snowden for "betraying his country," and who only now are beginning to see that they might have been wrong. It's not because the parties have been reversed, and it's not because they're bitter over losing. They just didn't know. If any country is going to function over the long-term, not everyone can be a revolutionary. Most people have to believe what they're told and go with the flow most of the time. These were those people. I'm pretty conservative by temperament, but most of my political friends are on the Left. I spend a good deal of our conversations simply trying to convince them that these people are not demons, and that this political moment is pregnant with opportunity.

Many Trump supporters don't know for certain whether ballots were faked in November 2020, but they know with apodictic certainty that the press, the FBI, and even the courts would lie to them if they were. They have every reason to believe that, and it's probably true. They watched the corporate press behave like animals for four years. Tens of millions of people will always see Brett Kavanaugh as a gang rapist, based on an unproven accusation, because of CNN. And CNN seems proud of that. They helped lead a lynch mob against a high school kid. They cheered on the most deadly and destructive riots in decades.

Conservatives have always complained that the media had a liberal bias. Fine, whatever: they still thought the press would admit the truth if they were cornered. They don't believe that anymore. What they've witnessed in recent years has shown them that the corporate press will say anything, do

anything, to achieve a political objective, or simply to ruin someone they perceive as an opponent. Since my casual Twitter thread ended up in the mouths of Tucker Carlson and Donald Trump, I've received hundreds of messages from people saying that I should prepare to be targeted. Others don't think that will happen, but even most of them don't think it's an irrational concern. We've seen an elderly lady receive physical threats after a CNN reporter accosted her at home to accuse her of aiding Kremlin disinformation ops. We've seen them threaten to dox someone for making a humorous meme.

Throughout 2020, the corporate press used its platform to excuse and encourage political violence. Time Magazine told us that during the 2020 riots, there were weekly conference calls involving - among others - leaders of the protests, local officials responsible for managing them, and members of the media charged with reporting on the events. They worked together with Silicon Valley to control the messaging about the ongoing crisis for maximum political effect. In case of a Trump victory, the same organization had protesters ready to be activated by text message in 400 cities the day after the election. Every town with a population over 50,000 would have been in for some pre-planned, centrally-controlled mayhem. In other countries we call that a color revolution.

Throughout the summer, establishment governors took advantage of COVID to change voting procedures, often over the protests of the state legislatures. It wasn't only the mass mailing of live ballots: they also lowered signature matching standards, axed existing voter ID and notarization requirements, and more. Many people reading this might think those were necessary changes, either due to the virus or to prevent potential voter suppression. I won't argue the point, but the fact is that the US Constitution states plainly that "The Times, Places and Manner of holding Elections... shall be prescribed in each State by the Legislature thereof." As far as conservatives were concerned, state governors used COVID to unconstitutionally usurp their legislatures' authority to unilaterally alter voting procedures just months before an election in order to help Biden make up for a massive enthusiasm gap by gaming the mail-in ballot system. Lawyers can argue over the legitimacy of the procedural modifications; the point is that conservatives believe in their bones - and I think they're probably right - that the cases would have been treated differently, in both the media and in court, if the parties were reversed.

And then came the Hunter Biden laptop scandal. Liberals dismiss the incident because, after four years of obsessing over the activities of the Trump children, they insist they're not interested in the behavior of the candidate's family members. But this misses the point entirely. Big Tech ran a coordinated censorship campaign against a major American newspaper while the rest of the media spread base propaganda to protect a political candidate. And once again, the campaign crossed institutional boundaries, with dozens of former intelligence officials throwing their weight behind the baseless and now-discredited claim that the laptop was part of a Russian disinformation campaign. That lie was promoted by Big Tech companies, while the true information being reported by The New York Post about the laptop's contents was suppressed. That is what happened.

Even the tech companies themselves now admit it was a "mistake" - Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey said it was an error and apologized - but the election is over, Joe Biden has appointed Facebook's government regulations executive as his ethics arbiter, so who cares, right? It hardly needs saying that if The New York Times had Donald Trump Jr.'s laptop, full of pictures of him smoking crack and engaging in group sex, lots of lurid family drama, and emails with pretty direct discussions of political corruption, the Paper of Record would not have had its accounts suspended for reporting on it. Let's remember that stories of

Trump being pissed on by Russian prostitutes and blackmailed by Putin were promoted as fact across the media spectrum and used as the basis for a multi-year criminal investigation, when the only evidence was a document paid for by his opposition and disavowed by its primary source.

The reaction of Trump supporters to all this was not, “no fair!” That was how they felt about Romney’s “binders of women” in 2012 or Harry Reid’s lie that Romney paid no federal taxes. This is different. Now they were beginning to see, accurately, that the institutions of their country — all of them — had been captured by people prepared to use any means to exclude them from the political process. And yet they showed up in record numbers to vote. Trump got 13 million more votes than in 2016 - 10 million more than Hillary Clinton had gotten.

As election day became election night and the tallies rolled in, Trump supporters allowed themselves some hope. But when the four critical swing states (and only those states) went dark around midnight, they knew.

Over the following weeks, they were shuffled around between honest critics, online grifters, and media scam artists selling them conspiracy theories. They latched onto one then another increasingly outlandish theory as they tried to put a concrete name on something very real, of which election day was only the culmination. Media and Big Tech did all they could to make things worse. Everything about the election was strange, confusing, and unprecedented - the changes to procedure, unprecedented mail-in voting, counting delays, etc - but rather than admit that and bring everything into the open, they banned discussion of it (even in private messages!), and launched an absurd propaganda campaign telling us that it was - I’m not making this up - the most well-run and secure election in American history.

Conservatives know - again, I think probably everyone knows - that just as Don Jr.’s laptop would have been the story of the century, if everything about the election dispute was the same, except the parties were reversed, suspicions about the outcome would have been taken very seriously. See 2016 for proof.

Even the judiciary had forfeited its credibility with these voters because of the opposition’s embrace of political violence. Trump supporters say, with good reason: What judge will stick his neck out for Trump knowing he’ll be destroyed in the media as a violent mob burns down his house? Maybe most judges would do their jobs, but given the events of the last four years it’s not an unreasonable concern, and the concern itself is enough to cast the whole system in doubt. Again, we know, thanks to Time Magazine, that riots were planned in cities across the country if Trump had won. Sure, they were “protests”, but they were planned by the same people as during the summer, and everyone knows what it would have meant. The Chamber of Commerce took the threat of a second round of destruction of its members’ property seriously enough to offer its assistance to the “well-funded cabal of powerful people, ranging across industries and ideologies, working together behind the scenes to influence perceptions, change rules and laws, steer media coverage and control the flow of information” - Time’s words, not mine.

Trump voters were adamant that the governors’ changes to election procedures were unconstitutional. Everything in law is open to interpretation, but it doesn’t require a Harvard Law degree to read Article 1, Section 4 (quoted above) and come to that conclusion. But they also knew the cases wouldn’t see a courtroom until after the election, and what judge was going to make a ruling that would be framed as a judicial coup d’etat just because some governors didn’t go through the proper channels? Even a judge willing to accept the personal risk would have also to be willing to inflict the chaos that would follow on the country. Even a well-intentioned judge could convince himself that, whatever happened or didn’t

happen, as a public servant he had no right to impose an opinion guaranteed to lead to mass violence - because the threat was not implied, it was direct. Some Trump supporters, unfortunately, thought the license for political violence applied to everyone; the hundreds of them now sitting in federal jails learned the hard way that it wasn't true.

From the perspective of Trump's supporters, the entrenched bureaucracy and security state subverted their populist president from day one. The natural guardrails of the Fourth Estate were removed because the press was part of the operation. Election rules were changed in an unconstitutional manner that could only be challenged after the deed was done, when judges and officials would be playing chicken with a direct threat of burning cities. Political violence was legitimized and encouraged. Major newspapers and sitting presidents were banned from social media, while the opposition enjoyed free rein to promote stories that were discredited once it was too late to matter. Conservatives put these things together and concluded that, whatever happened on November 3, 2020, it was not a free and fair democratic election in any sense that would have had meaning before Donald J. Trump was a candidate.

Trump supporters were led down some rabbit holes. But they are absolutely right that the institutions and power centers of this country have been monopolized by a Regime that believes they are beneath representation, and will observe no limits to prevent them getting it. I encourage people on the Left to recognize the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity in front of them. You're not going to agree with the conservatives on everything. But if in 2004 I had told you that the majority of the GOP voter base would soon be seeing the folly of the Iraq War, becoming skeptical of state surveillance, and beginning to see the need for action to help the poor and working classes, you'd have told me such a thing would transform the country. Take the opportunity. These people are not demons, and they are ready to listen in a way they haven't in a long, long time.

Darryl Cooper is the host of The MartyrMade Podcast, Co-host of The Unraveling w/Jocko Willink, and author of "that" Twitter thread.
